MARVEL

19

LGY#262

PERCY • SMITH • PEEPLES • JUNIOR • VALENZA

GHOST RIDER

HOW'S THIS FOR A CROSSROADS, TALIA?

THIS'LL DO.

OKAY...GET OVER HERE, JOHNNY.

BUT DON'T STEP ON ANY OF THE CHALK LINES.

WHAT SHOULD I DO?

YOU? NOTHING.

I NEED HIM.

HELP ME.

HELP ME FIND THE CULT OF MEPHISTO.

YOU'RE TIED TO THE SAME CURRENTS OF DARKNESS.

WHERE DO THEY WORSHIP?

SHOW US THE WAY.

THANKS.

WHAT... -KOFF-...

...WHAT DID YOU DO?

I TAPPED INTO THAT INTERNAL COMPASS OF YOURS.

THE RIDER USED TO HATE ME, I THINK.

BUT NOW WE'VE GOT OUR OWN THING GOING.

NOT SURE IF I'M SUPPOSED TO BE GRATEFUL OR JEALOUS OR DISTURBED.

HE'S IMPRINTED ME WITH A KIND OF DEMONIC NAVIGATION BIO-APP THAT WILL SHOW US THE WAY.

IF THE RIDER KNOWS WHERE TO GO, WHY NOT JUST SEND HIM?

BECAUSE I'VE GOT HISTORY WITH THESE #$%& PEOPLE.

THERE'S A DARK ROAD AHEAD THAT I NEED TO TRAVEL.

When innocent blood is spilled, a ***Spirit of Vengeance*** is born, and **JOHNNY BLAZE** finds himself transformed!

Marvel Comics presents...

GHOST RIDER

"Rite of Passage"

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PREVIOUSLY...

Talia Warroad was a former S.H.I.E.L.D. and F.B.I. agent with an expertise in the occult and the supernatural. When she was assigned to hunt down the Ghost Rider, Warroad discovered demonic influences across the country and was forced to team up with her original target. Eventually, this led to a romantic relationship with the Rider's human host, Johnny Blaze!

But once upon a time, Talia was just another troubled teen with an interest in the occult and a dangerous crush. Seeking to understand her mystic abilities, Talia fell under the sway of the Cult of Mephisto and their leader, Stefan Skaar. And though her parents sought Doctor Strange's help, Talia's salvation seemed out of reach.

Now Talia's teenage mistakes are catching up with her.

THE PAST.
BOSTON. TALIA WARROAD'S HOME.

ALMOST AN HOUR PAST WHEN HE SAID HE'D BE HERE.

GUESS HE'S NOT COMING.

WAIT!

SLK

APOLOGIES FOR THE DELAY.

AND THE--ER-- MESS.

GOOD AFTERNOON.

PLEASE, COME IN, DOCTOR STRANGE.

CAN I TAKE YOUR... CLOAK?

THE NEIGHBORS WHO WERE STARING AT ME...

...I'M GUESSING THEY LOOKED AT YOUR DAUGHTER IN MUCH THE SAME WAY.

SHE DIDN'T FIT IN, NO.

SO SHE HAD TO MAKE ANOTHER SPACE FOR HERSELF.

DID YOU KNOW YOUR HOME IS BIGGER ON THE INSIDE THAN IT IS ON THE OUTSIDE?

I'M SORRY... WHAT?

WHAT HAS TALIA BEEN UP TO IN HERE?

I WISH I COULD--

KLUD

THIS COULD BE DANGEROUS FOR YOU.

HMM.

BLOODLAYER

WHERE IS IT?

AH, I SEE YOU CAST A RUDIMENTARY CLOAKING SPELL OVER IT.

I SUPPOSE THAT'S GOOD ENOUGH FOR PRYING PARENTS.

BUT NOT FOR ME.

PUT IT DOWN.

AND GET THE @#$% OUT OF MY ROOM!

WEST VIRGINIA.

HOW WE LOOKING, TALIA?

I'D SAY WE'RE ALMOST--

--HERE.

ROAD CLOSED

NOBODY ATTENDING A ROADBLOCK ON A MAJOR HIGHWAY.

SEEMS WEIRD.

YEAH. SEEMS *REAL* WEIRD.

JUST LIKE THE RIDER IS HIDDEN INSIDE JOHNNY...

...THERE'S A LOT OF COAL IN THESE MOUNTAINS...

...AND IT BURNS HOT AS HELL.

BURROW

A PROUD MINING TOWN

YOU'VE GOT TO DIG DEEP TO FIND IT...

...WHERE THE WRONG KIND OF THINGS CAN GET UNEARTHED.

SOMETHING UGLY IS AT WORK HERE.

AND THE CULT OF MEPHISTO HAS SOME HAND IN IT.

STOP! PLEASE!

IT'S THE CHILDREN. THE CHILDREN ARE--

SHK

SKELCH

TAKE HIM TO THE MINE.

"TAKE HIM TO THE PIT."

KRINSH

KRINSH

I SAID PUT IT THE @#$% DOWN!

YOU LEFT BEHIND A PROJECTION OF YOURSELF, TALIA. AS SOMEONE UNTRAINED, YOU'RE, OF COURSE, LAUGHABLY SLOPPY AND RAW.

BUT PROMISING TOO. VERY PROMISING.

WHAT IS IT YOU DON'T WANT ME TO SEE?

@#%& GO AWAY AND MIND YOUR @#%& BUSINESS.

"KILL YOUR PARENTS... AND LIVE FOREVER."

TALIA...

GET OUT OF MY LIFE!

KRSSSH

NOK NOK

DOCTOR STRANGE? IS EVERYTHING OKAY?

WE HEARD SCREAMING! WE HEARD TALIA!

I KNEW YOUR DAUGHTER WAS IN DANGER...

...BUT I DIDN'T REALIZE YOU WERE AS WELL.

REST ASSURED, I AM GOING TO DO THE BEST I CAN TO HELP.

JOHNNY'S GOT HIS GRIP ON THE HANDLEBARS...

WELL?

...BUT I'VE BEEN DRIVING THIS LEG OF OUR JOURNEY.

BECAUSE WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW IS A CONTINUATION OF WHAT WAS HAPPENING WHEN I WAS 13.

THE COMPASS SAYS WE'RE HERE.

AIEEEE!

THAK

IT'S A @#$% KID.

GET! OFF! ME!

STOP!

THAT'S HOW IT WORKED WITH ME TOO.

THEY GO AFTER YOU WHEN YOU'RE YOUNG AND STUPID AND ANGRY AND IMPRESSIONABLE.

THEY GIVE YOU A TASTE OF POWER AND FREEDOM.

LISTEN TO ME. I KNOW THERE'S A PART OF YOU, DEEP DOWN, THAT HATES YOURSELF RIGHT NOW.

I KNOW THAT BECAUSE THE SAME THING HAPPENED TO ME WHEN I WAS YOUR AGE.

WHERE IS EVERYONE? WHAT DID YOU DO?

I--I DIDN'T WANT TO. I DIDN'T.

HE TOLD US WE HAD TO.

WHO?

STEFAN.

I'M SORRY. I'M SO SORRY.

I KNOW.

THE PAST.
THE NEW JERSEY TURNPIKE.

READY?

JUST REMEMBER. FULL CONFIDENCE. NO DOUBT.

NO DOUBT.

I'M ALL IN, STEFAN!

WE GO OUR OWN WAY.

SCREEEE

SCREEE

WE GO AGAINST THE RULES, THE LAWS, THE LANES THIS WORLD FOLLOWS LIKE SHEEP!

HONK HOOOOOOONK

SCREEEP

NKBC-108

HFP-024

HOOOOONK

KNSCH

SCREEEEECH

CHUKAK

WAIT...

WAIT, I THINK WE MIGHT HAVE JUST--

--SERIOUSLY @#$% SOMEBODY UP.

HOOOOOONK

HOOOOOONK

KRRRRRK

WHAT THE @#$%, TALIA?

I TOLD YOU NOT TO DOUBT.

THAT CAR--IT WENT THROUGH THE BARRIER. THE MAN INSIDE...

HE WAS GOING TO DIE OF A CORONARY NEXT WEEK ANYWAY.

HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT?

MAYBE I JUST MADE IT UP, BUT IT'S PROBABLY NOT FAR OFF THE MARK.

ZP-1215

ALL OF THESE ADULTS ARE LIVING IN A DOOMED PRISON OF THEIR OWN MAKING. AND THEY WANT US TO JOIN THEM.

BUT WE KNOW THE WAY OUT.

THE BOY TOLD ME THAT THE TOWN HAD BEEN SUFFERING ECONOMICALLY FOR YEARS.

THE PARENTS WERE CONSTANTLY TELLING THEIR CHILDREN THEY HAD NO FUTURE HERE.

STEFAN SHOWED UP IN BURROW...

...AND HE TOLD THEM OTHERWISE.

THEIR PARENTS WERE HOLDING THEM BACK.

THE CHILDREN COULD HAVE ANYTHING THEY WANTED.

AS LONG AS THEY FOLLOWED MEPHISTO.

AS LONG AS THEY FED THE DARKNESS.

THAT'S ENOUGH.

KILL THE OUTSIDERS!

FWOOSH

DON'T!

CAN YOU EAT THEIR SIN?

THERE IS A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CAN...

...AND SHOULD.

THEY'VE DONE TERRIBLE THINGS. BUT SO HAVE I.

THEY'RE ONLY CHILDREN!

BACK OFF!

BACK THE @#$% OFF, OR I'LL TOSS HIM.

I MEAN IT. I'LL-- UFF!

SNK

I DON'T WANT YOUR HELP.

I GO TO MEPHISTO WILLINGLY.

GO TOWARD THE LIGHT.

LET'S GO, EVERYONE!

RUMMM

KRAKAK

I DON'T KNOW THAT YOU CAN CALL THIS A WIN.

RUMMM

A SECT WAS STOPPED BEFORE THEY COULD SUMMON A DARKNESS FROM BELOW...

KROOOMM

...BUT A TOWN WAS POISONED...

...AND NOW THESE KIDS WILL HAVE TO LIVE, LIKE I HAVE, WITH WHAT THEY'VE DONE.

KRIK KRAK

IF STEFAN IS STILL OUT THERE, SPREADING THE WORD OF THE CULT, ENLISTING MORE YOUNG FOLLOWERS...

...THEN THERE'S A LONG, DARK ROAD AHEAD OF US PAVED WITH FAMILIAR SINS.

TO BE CONTINUED!

NEXT ISSUE

On the trail of the Cult of Mephisto, Talia Warroad and Johnny Blaze discover a town emptied of adults. What happened, what will become of the children left behind and how does it connect to Talia's own childhood? He may not be the nurturing type, but these children's only hope is the Ghost Rider!

Plus: A backup story featuring Ghost Rider and Kushala, the Spirit Rider!

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